RPOS 302: History of Political Theory Part II
Spring 2017

Politics and the Political

Tuesdays, Thursdays 2:45 p.m. – 4:05 p.m.
Room: BB 133
Lecturer: Mykolas Gudelis
Political Science Department
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 4:05 p.m. – 5:05 p.m. Humanities B 16 office.
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Course Description

This course focuses on a theoretical examination of what is being understood by politics in a historical context of modernity marked by events such as French, American, and Russian revolutions, emergence of the nation state, development of capitalism, dissolution of last European empires, decolonization, democratization and two major World Wars. Thinkers that we will engage with critically investigate classical political concepts such as state, revolution, power, citizenship, freedom, by analyzing their historical development and critically them in the context of late modernity and a contemporary political life.

Through texts by Karl Marx, Hannah Arendt, Michele Foucault, Jacques Ranciere we will investigate the concept of politics by asking questions: what exactly is the “fabric” that constitutes a true, legitimate political power? What political role is being carried out by the state? Do political institutions allow for a genuine political equality or only mask deep social divisions and conflicts? How is power to control and “manage” citizens being disseminated and what are the effects? Is democracy the only form of “genuine” politics and what kind of democracy is it exactly? Should politics have its own, normative and theoretical sphere independent of questions of social configurations, state institutions, economy and culture?

This course consists of intensive sessions, which will require your participation and a close reading, and analysis of assigned readings. You should be ready to dedicate a substantial amount of time and effort for this course. Your prior engagement in classes of political theory and familiarity with Ancient and early modern political thinkers will be useful.

Learning Objectives

- Learning to interpret political theory texts - their arguments, styles, and levels of meaning.
- Interpreting main arguments and considering their historical and cultural contexts, as well as their continued relevance.
- Learning how to make well-reasoned, persuasive arguments about political concepts and conditions based on the application of critical thinking.

Required Readings

In order to make readings accessible without a financial strain, many were placed on Blackboard for your convenience. You should print them out, read them carefully, and bring them to class with you. Reading them online or on your electronic devices in class will not do it. Make sure you have a hard copy of the text in front of you in class. Additionally, there are few books that are required for the course. These books have been ordered and are available for you in University’s bookstore:


**Course Requirements**

As a student registered for this class and receiving course credit, your responsibilities are:

- Attend all lectures.
- Arrive to lectures on time.
- Complete all readings by the assigned date, and come to class prepared.
- Contribute to a respectful academic environment, refraining from unrelated conversations or use of technology.
- Bring assigned readings to class with you.
- Be an active listener during the lectures: take notes, ask questions, raise points of critique.

**Assignments**

*Written Assignments*

This course does not have a standard midterm or final exam. Instead, there is a midterm paper and a final research paper, which will carry the same academic and grade values as midterm and final exams. In addition, there will be four short, three-page length homework assignments, each in the form of responding to a question that will be emailed to your SUNY e-mail address and also posted on Blackboard. You will have to print out your answer, bring it to class on the day the homework is due, and submit it to me at the end of the lecture before you leave the room. Remember, this is a political theory class. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. What is required is your own critical and analytical thinking. You will do well if these characteristics are reflected in your homework assignments.

*Presentations*

Each of you will require to prepare a 15min. presentation on the topic and a set of readings assigned for a particular date of the course week. Your presentations will be followed by questions to consider to your fellow students and open discussion. These short presentations will help you to practice to present arguments developed in the texts you read in a concise manner as well as engage in a discussion with your peers around the particular topic with reference to texts you have read. Feel free to comment on each other’s’ questions and responses, or to share relevant additional readings and ideas.

**Office Hours:**

You should not feel any hesitation to come see me to talk about the course material and lectures during my office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:05 – 5:05 p.m. in the Humanities B16 office. In addition, I will be available to meet you outside of these hours at a time convenient for you if you schedule an appointment with me by e-mail at least three days in advance.
Blackboard:

Some readings are placed on Blackboard for your convenience. Find the course, RPOS 302, History of Political Theory 2, and then click on it. Here you will find readings for the course and the syllabus. The short homework assignments will also be posted on Blackboard in addition to being sent to your SUNY e-mail address. I strongly recommend you download and print the readings, read them and bring them into lectures.

Attendance

You are responsible for all material covered in the class. Attendance will be taken within the first five minutes of the class. You should make arrangements with other students to share notes if you miss the class. If you have an excused absence, make sure you do assigned readings first, then come to me during office hours to discuss the missed material.

**Missing more than 2 classes, repeated lateness, or arriving unprepared will lower your final grade by one letter grade. Missing more than 4 classes will result in 2 letter grades lower on the final course grade.**

Plagiarism

Plagiarism means to pass off someone else’s work as your own. Please be warned that if found guilty of plagiarism, you will automatically fail the course and receive an E grade. Further actions will be taken, including sending your case before a university committee. Remember, taking text off internet sites such as Sparknotes or Wikipedia and "reworking them" will also earn you an E along with further actions. The whole idea of this course is for you to engage in active, critical thinking of your own and to demonstrate that you worked with the texts and on the basis of it you are constructing clear arguments with proper citations.

Course Grade Breakdown

Midterm paper: 25%
Presentations: 10%
Four short response papers: 15%
Final paper: 40%
Class participation and attendance: 10%

Overall Course Grade Requirements:

1. **Class Participation and attendance (10%)**: Based on evaluation of your participation in class discussions, your preparedness for each class, attendance and lateness. Having an individual grasp of the reading at hand prior to classroom sessions means that you will be able to understand the relevant concepts and ideas and be able to apply them to the discussions with your fellow students during each session in a critical, respectful and meaningful way. Your ability to participate in the class discussion will depend on the effort you put in reading assigned materials at home. The texts are engaging and exciting but also complicated and time consuming. Spent time wrestling with ideas of each thinker and you will be rewarded by gaining a deeper understanding of their arguments which will enrich your knowledge as a political thinker.
2. **Presentation (10%)** Each of you will have a short 10 – 15 min. presentation and a lead of a discussion on 2 – 3 questions that you will propose for the class to consider and discuss after your presentation.

3. **Four short response papers (15%)** These are short 3 page answers to the questions pertaining to a particular sections of the course. Questions will be distributed three days prior to the due date.

4. **Midterm paper (25%)** 5 - page response paper on a topic relevant to the material covered in the first half of the semester. A set of questions will be distributed one week prior to the due date. No late submissions, or submissions by e-mail will be accepted. You will have to hand in a physical hard copy of your paper on **Tuesday, March 21st**.

5. **Final Paper (40%)** 7 to 8 -page paper. Depending on the question, you may have to do some additional research in order to gain the proper level of knowledge on the thinker or the problem you have chosen to investigate. Late submissions, or submissions by e-mail will not be accepted. You will have to hand in a **physical hard copy of your final paper to me in class on Tuesday, May 9th**. This is the ONLY WAY your papers will be accepted.

**Midterm and Final Papers**

Your ability to understand and critically analyze the course material will be assessed through a midterm and final research papers. **No late submission** of mid-term or final papers will be accepted.

**Late mid-term or final paper submission will be accepted or incomplete grades will be given only in the event of serious personal or family illness or other unusual circumstances approved by the dean of undergraduate studies.**

For more information on the University's Standards of Academic Integrity see: [http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexcuse.shtml](http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexcuse.shtml)

**Lectures**

Lecture is a time for a professor to present the readings and unpack the arguments presented in texts at hand. However, I strongly value the benefits of a seminar type lectures. The form of intellectual dialogue is the most rewarding academic practice. That means, you are strongly encouraged to participate in a dialogue about the material. Feel free to interrupt me by raising your hands and asking questions. Do not shy from respectfully responding to other students’ arguments and participating in classroom discussions. Your participation will boost your grade overall. I encourage you to be an active participant in lectures, rather than a passive listener.

**Grade Appeals**

In order to appeal a grade on a particular assignment, you should contact your TA or the professor during office hours **within 2 weeks** of receiving the assignment back and submit a written explanation of your reasons for believing that the grade should be changed, not to exceed 2 pages. A grade appeal may result in the grade being raised, or left as is, depending on the results of the review. After two weeks, grade complaints will not be considered unless there are mitigating circumstances like a serious illness.
What do I do if I am sick or need alternate arrangements to fulfill course requirements?

Any mitigating circumstances should be brought to the attention of the professor as soon as possible. Any *foreseeable* circumstances (athletic event, religious holiday, e.g.) must be raised at the *beginning* of the semester or as early as possible.

**Excused Absences**

If you must miss the mid-term or final paper deadline or more than two normal classes, you must have documentation from the **dean of undergraduate studies** (Lecture Center 30 Phone: 518-442-3950) or your grade will be adversely affected. For more on University's Medical Excuse Policy see: [http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexcuse.shtml](http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexcuse.shtml)

**Reasonable accommodation**

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of Disabled Student Services (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations ([http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html](http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html)).

If you wish to discuss academic accommodations, for the above reasons or other cases including religious holidays, inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. Reasonable accommodations are generally established well in advance and rarely granted retroactively.

**What can I do to succeed academically in this course?**

*The Basics: Show up, read, listen, take notes, ask questions*

The most important indicator for success is completing assigned readings, regular attendance and active participation in a class.

**Visit Office Hours**

I will hold office hours two hours each week. You are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to discuss material or other questions on political theory, or if you are seeking an advice on academic success. If you are unable to attend the scheduled office hours due to a conflict with another class, email me to request an alternate time.

**Writing Center Services (Humanities 140)**


**Academic Support Services (Library Room 94)**

Arrange individual and group tutorial as well as study skills workshops on time management, how to improve your concentration, essay exam skills, listening skills, and overcoming procrastination. Visit their website: [http://www.albany.edu/oass/support_services.htm](http://www.albany.edu/oass/support_services.htm) or contact them at 442-5180.
COURSE OUTLINE

Part I.
State, Power, Community

Tuesday - Jan. 24
• Benjamin Constant, “The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns.” (On Blackboard)

Thursday - Jan. 26
• Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation.” (On blackboard)

Tuesday – Jan. 31
First homework question announced. Homework due Feb. 7
• Mikhail Bakunin, “The Immorality of the State” (On Blackboard)

Part II
Karl Marx

Politics as theory and practice in a historical material context

1. Thursday - Feb. 2

2. Tuesday - Feb. 7
First homework due

3. Thursday - Feb. 9

4. Tuesday – Feb. 14

5. Thursday – Feb. 16
Second homework questions announced. Homework is due Tuesday, Feb. 21st.

Hannah Arendt

Revolution, Politics, Freedom

6. Tuesday – Feb. 21
Second homework due hard copy in class
• Hannah Arendt, “Freedom and Politics” (On Blackboard)
7. Thursday – Feb. 23
- Maximillian Robespierre, Speech to the National Convention 1794. (On Blackboard)

8. Tuesday – Feb. 28

9. Thursday – Mar. 2

10. Tuesday – Mar. 7

11. Thursday – Mar. 9
Midterm exam paper question announced.

12. Spring Break

13. Michel Foucault
Biopolitics: Power, Institution, Body

12. Tuesday – Mar. 21
Submit mid-term exam papers in class.

13. Thursday – Mar. 23

14. Tuesday – Mar. 28

15. Thursday – Mar. 30

16. Tuesday – Apr. 4

17. Thursday – Apr. 6
Third homework question announced. Homework due Tuesday, April 11.
Carl Schmitt
Politics and the Political

18. Tuesday – Apr. 11
Third homework due

19. Thursday – Apr. 13

20. Thursday – Apr. 13
Fourth homework question announced. Homework due Tuesday, April 18.

Jacques Ranciere
Politics as Democracy

21. Tuesday – Apr. 18
Fourth homework due

22. Thursday – Apr. 20

23. Tuesday – Apr. 25

24. Thursday - Apr. 27
Final exam, final paper question announced

25. Tuesday – May 2

26. Thursday – May 4

Thursday – May 9
- Final exam papers due in class
- Course wrap up